Dynamics of Business English: A Holistic Study

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Department of English Studies

Supervisor:

Prof. J. K. Verma
Head
Department of English Studies

Research Scholar:

Pallavi Gupta
Department of English Studies

Dean:

Prof. J. K. Verma

Faculty of Arts

Dayalbagh Educational Institute (Deemed University)

Dayalbagh, Agra

How human language began has been a question pestering people for centuries. It cannot be confirmed that language is as old as humans but it is unquestionably true that language and human society are always together. Wherever humans exist, language exists. The origin of human language will perhaps remain forever incomprehensible. Concerning the origin of the language, Taylor writes, “However, the Bible indicates that there were two distinct miraculous events: the original creation of Adam as a talking and understanding being; and the subsequent division of humanity into language groups as a judgment on the rebellion of the descendants of Noah” (76).

People have tried to discover or to reconstruct something like the actual forms and structure of the first language. It lies forever beyond the reach of science. The spoken language in some form is almost positively coeval with Homo sapiens. The earliest records of written language, the only linguistic fossils humanity can hope to have, go back no more than 4,000 to 5,000 years.

Language is defined by many dictionaries. The *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary* defines language as “the system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of a particular country or area” (oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/language). Language is any formal organisation of gestures, signs, sounds and symbols used or comprehended as a tool of communicating thought.

The *Cambridge English Dictionary* defines language as “a system of communication consisting of sounds, words, and grammar, or the system of communication used by people in a particular country or type of work” (dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/language). Language plays a crucial role in every aspect of people’s lives because it sanctions them to communicate in a manner that helps the sharing of common ideas. The *Collins English Dictionary* defines language as “a system of communication which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols which are used by the people of a particular country or region for talking or writing” (collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/language). Raman and Sharma formulate the definition of language as “Language employs a combination of words

to communicate ideas in a meaningful way. By changing the word order in a sentence, you can change its meaning, and even make it meaningless" (5).

Language is the need of the society. It is through language that humanity has come out of the Stone Age and has developed science, art and technology in a huge way. Language is a social phenomenon as it pervades social life. It is an important means of sharing information between sender and receiver and allows people to interact with one another by following a fixed set of rules. In other words, it is a set of conventional communicative signals used by humans for interaction in a society.

English is the most widely studied second language in the world. It has a leading role to play in the globalised world. It provides a common platform for international trade, drives global collaboration and breaks down the barrier between cultures and opening doors to opportunities around the world. Ahmad writes, "English is acknowledged passport to better education and employment opportunities. English language plays a crucial role to weave the world into a single thread. English has a status of a second language in almost all the countries where it is not the first language" (478).

Communication is defined by the *Business Dictionary* as "Two-way process of reaching mutual understanding, in which participants not only exchange (encode-decode) information, news, ideas and feelings but also create and share meaning" (businessdictionary.com/definition/communication). For example, when a new born comes into the existence, the most important thing for him is the language to communicate. He asks for the basic need to connect himself with the kind of people of his own. So, communication is a process of transferring information from one individual to another. The *English Oxford Living Dictionary* defines it as "The imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium" (en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/communication). This transfer is required to maintain interpersonal relationships among people. So, the implication of communication is like the importance of breathing. Indeed, communication facilitates the spread of knowledge among

people. Rizvi writes, “Communication is an exchange of meaning and understanding. Meaning is central to communication, and transmission of meaning is the central objective of communication” (4).

There are a number of factors which make the English language crucial to communication in this present era. First of all, it is the most popular and common foreign language. This means that people from different countries usually use English as a common language to communicate. That’s why it becomes necessary for everyone to learn English in order to get in touch on an international level. Speaking in English will help people communicate with people from countries all over the world, not just English-speaking ones.

In today’s scenario English is found everywhere – it is in education, service, business, science, medical science, trade etc. This consistent development in English Language is both a result and cause of globalization as it has brought people from all cultures, civilizations and countries together to exchange goods and services. It plays its role in an effective way- as it is driving the international trade and reducing or diminishing the sense of distance among the countries. It is the language of modern scholarship, the internet and technology, the global media and advertising, international politics and diplomacy, and particularly, global business.

English has emerged as one of the major languages for doing business on the Internet. Spoken and written English has become the means of business communication. With the dawn of globalization, the picture took a different turn altogether. Now business deals and conferences are not restricted within a single area but it is spread across the globe.

English being the most widely spoken language easily became the business language. An individual with command over this global language will prove to be an asset to the organization and will have a guaranteed career growth. Of course, if one speaks well and uses high-quality vocabulary, it will add to one’s total profile. Don’t focus on becoming a pro at it overnight but one should effort regularly to

polish one's language by reading good publications. One can improve one's expression by writing for oneself.

It is business English which will assist students to activate and broaden their understanding of English and grow the basic confidence and skills to use it for their own purposes. It encourages them to think about language creativity. It is the practice of the language for special purposes as a communicative means to conduct business functions. Communication at the workplace is not limited to a single linguistic structure but a whole series of processes and media that supplement and complement each other to carry forward the required business task.

Business English is English that is used for commercial purposes. It is an interactive means in business organizations to carry out numerous functions. It is a mutual medium in a globalized business scenario helping non-native communicators of the language to interact with each other. It is a communicative proficiency that needs to be understood in the perspective of the workplace and, for that purpose, it is essential that one focuses on the fundamentals of business communication itself.

The vital role of business communication is to teach language for effective communication in a business-related environment. It will enhance communication skills and language competence among learners. This enables them to effectively communicate in domestic and international business-related situations so as to avoid mistakes.

Business communication competence can be assessed based on the accuracy and correctness of the content and the knowledge of business terminologies. This means that users fully acquire the knowledge shared by the international business community which results in individual satisfaction.

Business communication has certain principles for effective communication like completeness, conciseness, consideration, concreteness, clarity, coherence and correctness. These characteristics make business communication illustrative, impressive and effective.

In today's scenario, it is mandatory to know the basic principles of critical thinking, problem solving, and technical proficiency in the development of exposition and argument. They are required to understand the business technicalities at international level. Critical thinking is a disciplined manner of thought that a person uses to assess the validity of something. It is a person's critical thinking that helps him/ her to solve a problem or an issue. Today's world is technological world where one cannot be successful if one is not technically sound. Technical proficiency is an important factor if one wants to run with the world.

Paralanguage refers to nonverbal vocal cues which people can employ when they speak. Paralanguage includes accent, pitch, volume, speech rate, tone, pronunciation and fluency. Paralanguage itself means something beyond the languages. It has a great impact on the listeners.

The meaning of a word changes with the changes in the tone. A high tone can be a sign of anxiety or anger whereas a low tone can indicate doubt. These characteristics of tone convey intention and are influenced by situation. People can make their speech breathy or nasal or hoarse or rusty to create required effects. Verbal advertisements for certain products are often delivered in a low breathy accent, most probably to make them more glamorous and fascinating. Whispering and laughing are two good examples of paralanguage. If a speaker makes a change in his speech with the use of paralanguage, the resulting meaning can be quite different to listeners.

Kinesics is the study of body movements. Body language plays a key role to communicate message from one individual to another. When a speaker delivers his presentation, he observes the audience and automatically adjusts his explanation based on their nonverbal behaviour. As a patient enters into a doctor's chamber, he starts his diagnoses by the patient's body language. Sometimes he feels himself sick normally but he is diagnosed with a serious disease. It is the dynamics of nonverbal behaviour with verbal communication.

Face to face communication is a highly communicative process where sender and receiver both mutually participate in exchanging information verbally and nonverbally. This communication is just like a group dance where all the participants continuously adjust themselves by observing other participants' verbal and nonverbal displays and signals. This will not be enough to say that communication by body language only supports verbal communication to make it clear. People's personal appearance, facial expression, eye contact, gesture and posture provide a special emphasis to language communication or can be employed silently and still pass messages. Dynamics of verbal and nonverbal communication can be seen in a group discussion where one speaks at a time and other participants exchange information continuously among themselves and with the speaker through gesture, posture and facial expressions.

Proxemics is the study of space and how people use it. It is people's territory when they talk others. It is their immediate surroundings. It is essential to know how to maintain relationships with proper space whether personal or professional.

American anthropologist Edward T. Hall provided the framework for the current understanding of personal space in his book, *The Hidden Dimension* (1990). His concept was of a dynamic exchange among people, as they regulate their posture, distance and tone when dealing with others. He divided up the space around a person into four zones as shown in the following figure:

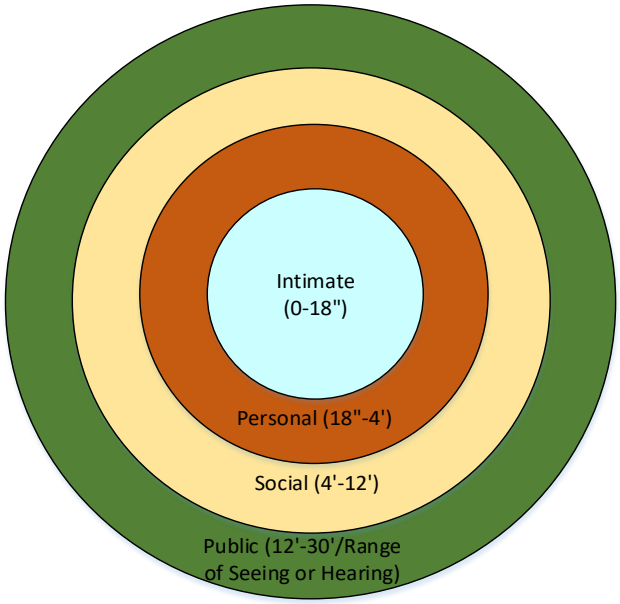

Figure: Four Zones of Proxemics

- Intimate Zone: It is a circle of personal touch to eighteen inches. It includes physical contact like kissing, hugging, whispering etc.
- Personal Zone: It is from eighteen inches to four feet away from an individual. It is still a space reserved for friends and family but here the conversations tend to be less private than intimate zone.
- Social Zone: It extends from four feet to twelve feet. Conversations are usually casual such as between a customer and a shopkeeper in a general store.
- Public Zone: It stretches from twelve feet to thirty feet or the range of eyesight or hearing. Public speeches by ministers fall in this category.

One's conversations with others in a specified zone say a lot about one's. One should be conscious when one communicates with others because one's closeness with others indicates one's relationship with them. In this manner, proxemics plays a key role to make communication dynamic.

Chronemics is the study of time with reference to communication. How punctual one is decides one's character towards others. The way in which one perceives, values, structures and reacts to time frames communication. The importance of time can never be denied. The use of time can affect lifestyle, daily agendas, speed of speech, movements and how long people are willing to listen. Time matters a lot in one's personal as well as professional life either one considers it to be valuable or not.

Time plays a crucial role to make communication dynamic. People see how punctual one is for one's responsibilities and duties. One's way of giving importance to time shows that one is faithful for one's work and one believes to complete one's work in time that has become a demand of the market.

It is essential to know a situation completely so that the required steps may be taken in the right direction. A writer should be able to make his/ her work concrete with the help of different modes of expression so that the readers may connect themselves with that work. Words are silent on paper but they may be expressive and concrete depending upon the writer's use of the modes of expression, i.e., descriptive, expository, narrative, scientific, and self-expressive, in written, visual, and oral communication. Thus all the modes of expression play a crucial role in business English as per the need of hour.

Collectively, these four elements of non verbal communication make communication graceful for the listeners. If one does not pay attention any of these four elements, one may face communication breakdown because people observe the speaker completely. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) offers the potential for improving teaching and learning of business English. Implementing ICT in business English classrooms is a mode to transport the outside world into the classroom, thus, creating an authentic perspective for the learners to acquire the skills they need in future in real business world.

Literature Review

Many researchers have worked on Business English and its different aspects. Munro wrote on *The Dynamics of Business Communication: A Look at Social Media Use in the Work Place* (2014). It

reviews the use of social media in a work place setting. Mark Ellis and Christine Johnson wrote on *Teaching Business English: An Introduction to Business English for Language Teachers, Trainers, and Course Organizers* (1994). It explains techniques for analysing learners' specific requirements based on the jobs they do and the tasks they want to achieve.

Jana Rustler wrote on *Fundamentals of Business English 001: Introductory Text, Vocabulary and Correspondence Exercises for University of Applied Sciences Students* (2009). The focal point of this book is not on memorization or translation, but rather the student's ability to comprehend how business vocabulary is used and to master their meaning through inquiring and other actions.

Robinson and B. M. H. worked on Communicative Competence in Business English (1988). It focuses on the use of language for achieving communication tasks, emphasising student initiative and interaction, making students aware of distinction in language use, and concentrating on appropriacy and fluency. Agnus worked on *Proxemics: The Study of Space* (2012). He studied the space language in interpersonal relationships thoroughly. Lckinger researched on *A Behavioral Game Methodology for the Study of Proxemic Behavior* (1982). This study was on an analytical framework for the interpersonal immediacy behaviours based on a hypothesized interactive balance between compensatory behaviour produced by information overload and reciprocal behaviour in response to social norms of reciprocity.

Chong and Druckman worked on *Dynamics in Mass Communication Effects Research* (2012). They researched on how mass communication affects citizens' opinions. Hans and Hans researched on *Role of Professional Communication in Today's World of Business and Commerce* (2014). They define communication as the addition of all things that one person does when he wants to create a thoughtful understanding about something in the mind of another. It is a connection that transports meaning and comprises a systematic and constant process of telling, listening and understanding.

Scot Ober worked on *Contemporary Business English* (2005). In his work, he includes extensive examples that demonstrate each rule of grammar and end-of-chapter summaries provide students with a

convenient review of these rules. Reid researched on *Paralinguistic Cue and Their Effect on Leader Credibility* (2013). His thesis directed the six primary paralinguistic cues of fluidity, articulation, sonority, tempo, emotion and dynamic strength to determine how these cues interrelate and affect the trustworthiness and palatability.

Schuller et al. worked on *Paralinguistics in Speech and Language – State-of-the-art and the Challenge* (2013). The work provides a broad overview of the constantly growing field by defining the field, introducing typical applications, presenting exemplary resources and sharing a unified view of the chain of processing. Lunenburg researched on *Louder than Words: The Hidden Power of Nonverbal Communication in the Workplace* (2010). In his work, he examined paralinguistics, kinesics, proxemics and chronemics separately. The collective study of these four elements has not been done. Hans and Hans studied *Kinesics, Haptics and Proxemics: Aspects of Nonverbal Communication* (2015). They took these aspects individually for their research.

Moira Sambey wrote on *Business English and Communication* (1999). It begins with the basics of communication and sentence structure in English, and leads the reader step by step through to the formal report writing and public speaking, with the aim of improving the reader's speaking, listening, reading and writing skills essential in today's global business world.

Mary Ellen Guffey and Carolyn M. Seefer wrote on *Business English* (1990). It clears the need of developing the strong language skills essential to perform confidently in today's digital classroom and tomorrow's workplace. Nabangi studied *The Study of Noise and Chronemics as Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in Class: A Case Study of Form Four Class at Jamuhuri High School- Nairobi* (2009). The purpose of this research was to analyse the noise and to look at chronemics as a behavioural nonverbal cue that could communicate in the class.

Kalman et al. worked on *Online Chronemics Convey Social Information* (2013). They explored the involvement of time-related messages in communication and has shown that time is an important

component of the message in both traditional and online communication. Maximilian Delphinus Berlitz wrote on *A Course in Business English* (1919). It focuses on the requirements of business world. It helps the learners to understand the vocabulary of business English.

Zhu Zhengguo , Lin Lili and Zhu Wenzhong wrote a research paper on *Research on the Education System of Business English Courses Based on the Case of GDUFS* (2016). In order to develop a more scientific education system of business English courses, this paper studies the case of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. It exhibits that there are many complications when students are learning business English, so the school should add some related courses to help students to deal with these problems.

Objectives of the Proposed Study

The literature review reveals that many of the researches have been done the various dimensions of business English separately but a holistic and comprehensive study of business English has yet not been attempted. This research will exhibit how business English influences the business world in this current time. It will demonstrate how the four elements of non verbal communication- paralinguistics, kinesics, proxemics and chronemics play a crucial role to make communication dynamic and increase the profit in business at a great level on an international level. The business people who hesitate to communicate in English and are not ready to understand the business vocabulary may be inferior to others who are proficient in speaking English. This research will display the need of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to bring numerous fruitful changes in the field of learning business English so that people from different countries may move together and welcome the technological development in the field of trade and commerce. The proposed research will take within its purview both the theoretical and practical dimensions of business English. ICT based learning resources will be developed for two levels- Pre-intermediate and Advanced levels.

The objectives of the proposed study are:

- To analyse the importance of business English in the present era.
- To examine the socio-cultural dimensions of business English.
- To analyse the effect of paralinguistics, kinesics, proxemics and chronemics as a whole on the dynamics of business English.
- To develop the ICT based learning resources in business English (production of business English material)

Keeping in view the above objectives, the proposed study comprises the following chapter scheme:

Chapter I – Business English: Evolution and Growth

Chapter II – Paralinguistics and Business English

Chapter III – Role of Kinesics, Proxemics and Chronemics in Business English

Chapter IV – Business English and ICT

Chapter V – Business English in Practice: Developing Learning Resources

Chapter VI – Conclusion

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